**Classroom Debate Activity**

**Laura Pepper**

**Subject:** Biology

**Topic:** Molecular Genetics, Grade 12

**Question**: “Do you think that research on human pre- embryos should be allowed? Should fetal tissue be used to treat disease? Make sure to explain to the class what is considered a pre- embryo and when an embryo is considered a fetus.”

(Also, students could be given several questions and choose a topic as a group.)

**Teams**

Students will be assigned to a team of 2 or 3 students:

1. Judges (will formulate questions and comments for the teams)
2. Affirmative teams (arguing for the topic)
3. Negative teams (arguing against the topic)

Even if students do not agree with the position they are assigned, they must debate as if they did agree. This is a learning experience and it will be beneficial to view the subject from another angle.

**Researching Your Topic:**

Students will be given 45 minutes at the school library to research the topic. Students must find different sources of supporting information for your topic. These could include; online articles, books, magazines, etc. During the debate, students may use diagrams, slides, videos etc. After your 45 minutes of research period you will come together as a group to collaborate for 20 minutes. Make sure your group has adequately covered the topic. Think about the opposing team and what they will be debating. Can you support your viewpoint with reliable facts?

**Proper Debate Etiquette**

Students are to adhere to proper debate etiquette.

* No put downs
* You must raise your hand if it is not your turn to speak
* Teams lose one point for each interruption
* Teams lose one point for whispering when another person is talking

If students do not follow the rules, they will be disqualified. Desks will be arranged facing one another and the group’s topic and sides will be written on the board behind each group.

**The Debate**

* 10 minutes of affirmation presentations
* 10 minutes for negative presentation
* 5 minutes affirmation rebuttal
* 5 minutes negative rebuttal
* Closing statements
* Judges ask questions and comments
* Determine winner (add up scores on rubric)

**Debate Template;**

Opening Statement: Gather main arguments into an introductory statement. This does not give specific information, just states ‘this is true because of A, B and C’.

Topic Statement for Affirmation Team: Present the main ideas for the team. These are specific statements that prove A, B and C.

Negative Team: Answer the arguments of the affirmation team. This team must take notes during the affirmation teams presentation and answer/respond by *disproving* all of the arguments using specific information.

Closing Statements: Presents the closing statements for the team. The main ideas are presented with a brief overview.

**Decision of Winner**

The winning team is based only on the quality of delivery and not based on personal agreement of the subject. The scores of the rubric will be added up to decide the winner. The teacher may choose the winner if a tie has occurred or if he/she feels that there is need.

**Rubric;** http://www2.lhric.org/ertc/Wendy/Wzrubric.htm

**Resources:**

http://www.educationworld.com/a\_lesson/lesson/lesson304b.shtml